

## PAUL HARVEY'S 'IF I WERE THE DEVIL' TRANSCRIPT

If I were the devil ... If I were the Prince of Darkness, I'd want to engulf the whole world in darkness. And I'd have a third of it's real estate, and four-fifths of its population, but I wouldn't be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree — Thee. So I'd set about however necessary to take over the United States. I'd subvert the churches first — I'd begin with a campaign of whispers. With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve: 'Do as you please.'

“To the young, I would whisper that ‘The Bible is a myth.’ I would convince them that man created God instead of the other way around. I would confide that what's bad is good, and what's good is ‘square.’ And the old, I would teach to pray, after me, ‘Our Father, which art in Washington...’

“And then I'd get organized. I'd educate authors in how to make lurid literature exciting, so that anything else would appear dull and uninteresting. I'd threaten TV with dirtier movies and vice versa. I'd pedal narcotics to whom I could. I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction. I'd tranquilize the rest with pills.

“If I were the devil I'd soon have families that war with themselves, churches at war with themselves, and nations at war with themselves; until each in its turn was consumed. And with promises of higher ratings I'd have mesmerizing media fanning the flames. If I were the devil I would encourage schools to refine young intellects, but neglect to discipline emotions — just let those run wild, until before you knew it, you'd have to have drug sniffing dogs and metal detectors at every schoolhouse door.

“Within a decade I'd have prisons overflowing, I'd have judges promoting pornography — soon I could evict God from the courthouse, then from the schoolhouse, and then from the houses of Congress. And in His own churches I would substitute psychology for religion, and deify science. I would lure priests and pastors into misusing boys and girls, and church money. If I were the devil I'd make the symbols of Easter an egg and the symbol of Christmas a bottle.

“If I were the devil I'd take from those who have, and give to those who wanted until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious. And what do you bet? I couldn't get whole states to promote gambling as thee way to get rich? I would caution against extremes and hard work, in Patriotism, in moral conduct. I would convince the young that marriage is old-fashioned, that swinging is more fun, that what you see on TV is the way to be. And thus I could undress you in public, and I could lure you into bed with diseases for which there is no cure. In other words, if I were the devil I'd just keep right on doing on what he's doing. Paul Harvey, good day.”

Paul Harvey began broadcasting from the ABC affiliate WENR after he moved to Chicago in June 1944. Harvey added 'The Rest of the Story' as a tagline to in-depth feature stories in 1946. WENR and WLS used the same frequency, 890 kHz, in a time-sharing agreement until 1954 when ABC bought 50 percent of WLS and merged the two stations. WENR was then defunct, but the call letters are used today by a radio station in Englewood, Tennessee broadcasting on 1090 kHz.

Beginning in 1952, Harvey was a friend of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover; the men were introduced to each other by Rep. Fred Busbey (R-Illinois); Harvey would often submit "advance copies of his radio script for comment and approval."

One of Harvey's regular topics was lax security, especially at Argonne National Laboratory, a nuclear test site about 20 miles west of Chicago. Just after midnight on February 6, 1951, Harvey trespassed at Argonne to demonstrate the lax security. He was immediately apprehended. Espionage charges were considered, but a grand jury did not convict him.

Harvey's friendship with Hoover perhaps helped Harvey escape criminal charges relating to his trespassing at Argonne National Laboratory. Harvey was also a close friend of Senator Joseph McCarthy and supporter of his search for Communists.

During the late 1960s through the early 1980s, Harvey was televised in five-minute editorial that local stations could insert into their local news programs or show separately.

Harvey was a close friend of Reverend Billy Graham. He attended Calvary Memorial Church, in Oak Park from the mid-1970's to the mid-1980's.

Salon magazine called him the "finest huckster ever to roam the airwaves." while critics pointed out that his blending of content and product endorsements was misleading or confusing to his audience. Harvey considered advertising as just another type of news.

Paul Harvey is credited with coining the term "skyjack" for aircraft hijacking. He is also credited with coining the terms "Reaganomics" and "guesstimate."

Paul Harvey was married to Lynne Cooper of St. Louis. She is credited with giving his career its successful trajectory. Lynne died at age of 92 on May 3, 2008. He died February 28, 2009, at the age of 90.

\*The audio and transcript is apparently edited to represent the 1996 version by Paul Harvey. There is also a version circulating on the Internet since about 1999 that is attributed to Paul Harvey, but is not the words of Paul Harvey — similar, but not authentic Paul Harvey.

See also ...

Snopes.com [Paul Harvey 'If I Were the Devil'](#) [The Snopes article compares text from the 1964 news article by Paul Harvey with the 1996 newspaper article by Paul Harvey. The article also includes a 1999 text circulated on the Internet that is not written by Paul Harvey.]

If I were the devil . . .

I would gain control of the most powerful nation in the world;

I would delude their minds into thinking that they had come from man's effort, instead of God's blessings;

I would promote an attitude of loving things and using people, instead of the other way around;

I would dupe entire states into relying on gambling for their state revenue;

I would convince people that character is not an issue when it comes to leadership;

I would make it legal to take the life of unborn babies;

I would make it socially acceptable to take one's own life, and invent machines to make it convenient;

I would cheapen human life as much as possible so that the life of animals are valued more than human beings;

I would take God out of the schools, where even the mention of His name was grounds for a lawsuit;

I would come up with drugs that sedate the mind and target the young, and I would get sports heroes to advertise them;

I would get control of the media, so that every night I could pollute the mind of every family member for my agenda;

I would attack the family, the backbone of any nation.

I would make divorce acceptable and easy, even fashionable. If the family crumbles, so does the nation;

I would compel people to express their most depraved fantasies on canvas and movie screens, and I would call it art;

I would convince the world that people are born homosexuals, and that their lifestyles should be accepted and marveled;

I would convince the people that right and wrong are determined by a few who call themselves authorities and refer to their agenda as politically correct;

I would persuade people that the church is irrelevant and out of date, and the Bible is for the naive;

I would dull the minds of Christians, and make them believe that prayer is not important, and that faithfulness and obedience are optional;

I guess I would leave things pretty much the way they are.

**Origins:** "If I Were the Devil" is a form of social criticism, an essay that postulates what steps the devil might take in order to corrupt human civilization (and the United States in particular) and lead it down the path of darkness – before delivering the catch that all the steps listed are phenomena that are already taking place in the world today. It was written and popularized by national radio commentator and syndicated columnist Paul Harvey, who from the mid-1960s onwards featured it in both media many times over the course of his long career, periodically updating it to incorporate current trends.

In an odd twist, though (and the reason this item is rated as a "mixture"), one of the most widely Internet-circulated versions of "If I Were the Devil," as reproduced in the "Example" block above, is not from Paul Harvey. Although it is clearly inspired by and in the spirit of Paul Harvey's essay of the same name, it bears virtually no textual resemblance to the original – while it is similar in structure and theme, not one of its lines appears in any of various forms of the essay which Paul Harvey presented to his audiences over the years.

The oldest genuine Paul Harvey version of this piece we've found so far appeared in his newspaper column in 1964:

If I Were the Devil

If I were the Prince of Darkness I would want to engulf the whole earth in darkness.

I'd have a third of its real estate and four-fifths of its population, but I would not be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree.

So I should set about however necessary, to take over the United States.

I would begin with a campaign of whispers.

With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve, "Do as you please."

To the young I would whisper "The Bible is a myth." I would convince them that "man created God," instead of the other way around. I would confide that "what is bad is good and what is good is square."

In the ears of the young married I would whisper that work is debasing, that cocktail parties are good for you. I would caution them not to be "extreme" in religion, in patriotism, in moral conduct.

And the old I would teach to pray — to say after me — "Our father which are in Washington."

Then I'd get organized.

I'd educate authors in how to make lurid literature exciting so that anything else would appear dull, uninteresting.

I'd threaten TV with dirtier movies, and vice-versa.

I'd infiltrate unions and urge more loafing, less work. Idle hands usually work for me.

I'd peddle narcotics to whom I could, I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction, I'd tranquilize the rest with pills.

If I were the Devil, I would encourage schools to refine young intellects, but neglect to discipline emotions; let those run wild.

I'd designate an atheist to front for me before the highest courts and I'd get preachers to say, "She's right."

With flattery and promises of power I would get the courts to vote against God and in favor of pornography.

Thus I would evict God from the courthouse, then from the schoolhouse, then from the Houses of Congress.

Then in his own churches I'd substitute psychology for religion and deify science.

If I were Satan I'd make the symbol of Easter an egg

And the symbol of Christmas a bottle.

If I were the Devil I'd take from those who have and give to those who wanted until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious. Then my police state would force everybody back to work.

Then I would separate families, putting children in uniform, women in coal mines and objectors in slave-labor camps.

If I were Satan I'd just keep doing what I'm doing and the whole world go to hell as sure as the Devil.

Contrasting that 1964 version of the essay with Paul Harvey's 1996 newspaper version shows that, although the concept and structure of the essay remained the same across the decades, its content evolved quite a bit over the years:

If I were the prince of darkness, I would want to engulf the whole world in darkness.

I'd have a third of its real estate and four-fifths of its population, but I would not be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree — thee.

So, I would set about however necessary to take over the United States.

I'd subvert the churches first, and I would begin with a campaign of whispers.

With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve: "Do as you please."

To the young, I would whisper that the Bible is a myth. I would convince the children that man created God instead of the other way around. I'd confide that what's bad is good and what's good is square.

And the old, I would teach to pray after me, "Our Father, which are in Washington ..."

Then, I'd get organized, I'd educate authors in how to make lurid literature exciting so that anything else would appear dull and uninteresting.

I'd peddle narcotics to whom I could. I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction. I'd tranquilize the rest with pills.

If I were the devil, I'd soon have families at war with themselves, churches at war with themselves and nations at war with themselves until each, in its turn, was consumed.

And with promises of higher ratings, I'd have mesmerizing media fanning the flames.

If I were the devil, I would encourage schools to refine young intellect but neglect to discipline emotions. I'd tell teachers to let those students run wild. And before you knew it, you'd have drug-sniffing dogs and metal detectors at every schoolhouse door.

With a decade, I'd have prisons overflowing and judges promoting pornography. Soon, I would evict God from the courthouse and the schoolhouse and them from the houses of Congress.

In his own churches, I would substitute psychology for religion and deify science. I'd lure priests and pastors into misusing boys and girls and church money.

If I were the devil, I'd take from those who have and give to those who wanted until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious.

What'll you bet I couldn't get whole states to promote gambling as the way to get rich?

I'd convince the young that marriage is old-fashioned, that swinging is more fun and that what you see on television is the way to be.

And thus, I could undress you in public and lure you into bed with diseases for which there are no cures.

In other words, if I were the devil, I'd just keep right on doing what he's doing.

Read more at <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/devil.asp#ew0HW7TMP8UA3jRI.99>